

sian Ballet at the Opera, In my whole life I had never felt more numb, more out of place, more mute. Mme de Regnier and her sister-in-law, Henri de Regnier, who was being witty, and Vaudoyer, with a dark and fatal look, were also there. . . .

"M. Gide," exclaimed Mme de Regnier, "come and help us calm Mme de Noailles." (The latter was talking so loud and so animatedly that she was attracting the attention of half the audience on the floor.)

Instead of remaining silent (but some remark was expected of me!) what did I find to say? Just this:

"Oh, Madame de Noailles is much more interesting when she is excited."²⁰

I believe these were the only words I pronounced all evening long. I am still blushing for them. I wrote shortly afterward to Mme Muhlfield to attempt to apologize for my sullenness: "You must have realized how much better it was to know me only from a distance," I said to her, or words to that effect (she was seeing me for the first time — and had long wanted to know me). Not long after, I received an enthusiastic letter from her; and Copeau showed me another in which she spoke of my attractiveness, of my secret charm, etc. . . . If I had said "shit" she would have considered it divine.

23/uly

Feeling of the indispensable. I have never had it more strongly, since I wrote *Andre Walter*, than now that I am writing *Con/cfon*.²¹ The fear that someone else might get ahead of me; it seems to me that the subject is floating in the air; I am amazed that no one reaches out to seize it before me. At the time of *Andre Walter* I used to hurl myself upon certain books (Rod's *Course frlamort* for instance²²). » • . If this were to be it! I knew a similar fear at the moment of *Les Nourritures*.

Cavaliere, August

From beneath the reed roof sheltering the bench on which I am stretched out and the table on which I am leaning,

which (for it is still
 early morning) throws its shadow to my right on the
 arena marked by
 the hens* feet, where sand, ashes, and gravel are
 mingled with the re- •
 mains of chicken feed — I see, swimming in the fluid
 liqueur that seems
 at once blue and gilded those outlines of colonial
 exoticism that I can

²⁰ The word *excite*, used here, is generally reserved for
 sexual excite-
 ment or an artificial stimulation.

⁹¹ Gide's 'Tour Socratic Dialogues'* on the subject of
 homosexuality did
 not appear openly and under Ms name until 1924, But two
 earlier editions,
 anonymous and without indication of place or publisher's
 name, had appeared
 in 1911 and 1920. The edition of 1911 was entitled simply
C.R.D.N.

²² *The Mad Rush toward Death* by Edouard Rod
 appeared in 1885,